

MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO, *Cato Maior de senectute* [On Old Age]; *Paradoxa stoicorum* [Stoic Paradoxes]; *Somnium Scipionis* [The Dream of Scipio]
In Latin, decorated manuscript on parchment
Northern Italy, c. 1440-1470

ii (parchment) + 32 + ii folios on parchment, a palimpsest, parchment reused from fourteenth-century documents (under-text is perpendicular to the present text), and at least one other source, probably fifteenth-century, where the under-text and present text have the same orientation (under-text scrubbed away but partially visible in margins, see especially ff. 2v, 8v-9, 11, 12v-13, 15, 17, and 18v; on f. 18v, a previous cataloguer read "Johannes de V" in Cremona, dated 1[3]53; there is a notary mark on f. 19), modern foliation in pencil top outer corner recto, wanting an unknown number of quires at the end (only the first page of the *Somnium Scipionis* present), else complete (collation: i¹², ii-iii¹⁰), horizontal catchwords center lower margin, no leaf or quire signatures, ruled very lightly in lead or brown crayon with single vertical bounding lines, some prickings remain top and bottom margins (justification, 138 x 82-80 mm.), written in an accomplished humanist bookhand in twenty-nine long lines, red rubrics on f. 32v only, blank lines for rubrics, three large six- to four-line red initials with delicate contrasting penwork in brown, some folds from vellum's original use, discoloration to first and last leaves, and some worm holes in the closing leaves, but overall in good condition. Bound in modern blue morocco over pasteboard by Bernard Middleton (b. 1924), the noted English book-binder and restorer (pencil note in Graham Pollard's hand, front flyleaf), gilt title on spine, "Cicero/ XV Saec./ MS," gilt edges, partial reader's ticket signed "de la Mare" pasted to flyleaf, in excellent condition. Dimensions 192 x 128 mm.

This manuscript includes two (and the start of a third) of Cicero's most popular works during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, when they were studied for their content as well as for their Latin style (as indeed, they still are today). This manuscript is a palimpsest (copied on re-used parchment), which is always of interest, and notable for its accomplished, elegant humanist script, and attractive initials. It was once owned by the noted bibliographer, Graham Pollard.

PROVENANCE

1. The evidence of the script and initials supports a date c. 1440-70; the style of the decorated initials suggest an origin in Northern Italy, possibly in Northeastern Italy, although an earlier cataloguer suggested Northwestern Italy presumably because of the under-script, which includes a mention of Cremona, and further investigation is called for.

The scribe was an accomplished one; his distinctive humanistic script includes a small single-lobed "a" and some elements of gothic, including occasional letter unions. Given the use of previously used parchment, we might guess this was copied by a humanist collecting these well-loved texts of Cicero for his own enjoyment (even the pen initials are in text ink, and were probably by the scribe).

There are a few marginal corrections, pointing hands and other marks by contemporary readers on ff. 1-6 (in the *De senectute*) and ff. 30v-31 (near the end of the *Paradoxa stoicorum*).

Palimpsest manuscripts are always of potential interest. At least some of the under-texts in the present manuscript appear to be Latin documents from fourteenth century Italy (a very easily discernible notary mark survives on f. 19). These leaves are written perpendicular to the present manuscript, and include evidence of folds. On f. 17, in the present outer margin, the text of a document likely ends in a date; on f. 18v, the under-text, now in the top inner margin clearly includes a name, "Johannes." As noted above, a previous cataloguer has read on f. 18v, "Johannes de V" in Cremona, dated 1[3]53," but I have been unable to verify this. The under-text on ff. 5, 8v, 15, 20rv, and 27, however, is copied with the same orientation as the present text, and is quite dense; it is certainly from a different source than the documents. It appears to be Italian, and from the fourteenth or possibly early fifteenth century, but deserves further analysis.

2. Belonged to Graham Pollard (1903-1976), the eminent bibliographer, president of the London Bibliographical Society, and the author of numerous fundamental works related to the history of the book. Among Pollard's many interests, there is the history of the medieval book-trade in Oxford; his famous exposure, with John Carter, of T. J. Wise (1859-1937) as a fraud also deserves mention; his inscription "bought at Sotheby's c.1952," followed by a price code, front flyleaf.

TEXT

ff. 1-21v, incipit, "O Tite si quid ego adiuto curam ue leuasso que nunc te coquit ... ut ea que ex me audiistis [sic] re experti probare possitis";

Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Cato maior de senectute* (*On Old Age*); numerous modern editions, including Powell, 1998 and 2006; Simbeck, 1917; and Wuilleumier, 1961 (with French translation), and Falconer, 1992 (with English translation).

The *Cato maior de senectute* survives in at least four hundred manuscripts. The text was extremely popular during the Renaissance, and all but fifty of these manuscripts date from the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries (Vogel, 1939; "Cato Maior de senectute," in Reynolds, 1983, pp. 116-120; Powell, 1998). Most of the research on the manuscript tradition has focused on the pre-twelfth century copies (Powell, 1998). Noting that the text in the four or five hundred surviving manuscripts from the later Middle Ages and Renaissance was a "vulgate," in other words the "product of a continuous process of corruption and contamination," Powell expressed doubt about the utility of a study of these later manuscripts as an aid to an edition. However, the fact remains that fifteenth-century copies such as this one are important witnesses to the reception of the text in the Renaissance.

Cicero composed the *De senectute* in 44 B.C., in the last year of his own life. It was a difficult period for the author, who was still grieving following the death of his beloved daughter Tullia, and dealing with his expulsion from public life by Mark Anthony and his growing despair for the restoration of the Roman Republic. The work is written as a fictional dialogue between the Roman statesman Cato the Elder (234-149 B.C.), the celebrated general, Scipio Africanus (236-183 B.C., who defeated Hannibal), and the consul Gaius Laelius Sapiens (188-129 B.C.), presenting Cicero's argument that one's life should be used to cultivate wisdom in order to overcome the miseries of old age, disease, and death. Well-loved during the Renaissance, Cicero's discussion of the subject still speaks to a wide audience today; in addition to its

profound subject matter, it has remained popular because of its subject and its clear and beautiful language that has made it a useful example for teaching Latin to students.

ff. 21v-32, [*Paradoxas ad Brutum*, added], incipit, "Animadverti Brute Sepe Catonem avum [sic] tuum cum in senatu sententiam diceret locos graves e philosophia tractare ... sed etiam in opes et pauperes existimandi sunt," *Deo gratias, Amen*. [Added, bottom margin: Gio[va]n[?] Maria. Amen].

Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Paradoxa stoicorum*; numerous editions, including Müller, 1891, Plasberg, 1908-1911 and Molager, 1971. A list of extant manuscripts and editions is found in Ronnick, 1991, pp. 143-199. The manuscript tradition is also discussed in Badali, 1968.

Although the shortest of Cicero's extant philosophical works, the *Paradoxa stoicorum* exerted a strong influence on the western intellectual tradition. It was a standard text in school and university curricula from the Middle Ages onwards. The earliest manuscripts of the *Paradoxa* survive as part of a group of eight philosophical treatises by Cicero as discussed by R.H. Rouse, "De natura deorum...Paradoxa Stoicorum..." (Reynolds, 1983, pp. 124-128). The text of these works descend from three Carolingian manuscripts from north-eastern and central France, two of which are known as the "Leiden corpus."

Cicero composed his *Paradoxa stoicorum* as an introduction to Stoicism in 46 B.C. In this work, he sets out to explain and construct a rhetorically persuasive defense of six Stoic principles (called paradoxes) commonly rejected by non-stoics, namely, that moral value is the only good, virtue is sufficient for happiness, all virtues and vices are equal, all fools are madmen, only the wise man is really free, and only the wise man is rich. Cicero states that the work was an exercise composed for his own amusement, but it may also be a serious work that enabled him to display his rhetorical skills and to attack his enemies.

f. 32v, T. Cicero *De Somnio Scipio* [probably corrected from "Scipionis"], incipit, "Cum in africanam uenissem a manilio consule ... ea forma que mihi ex imagine eius//"

Cicero's *Somnio scipionis*, here ending imperfectly at the end of the first page, Powell, 2006, ed., pp. 135-136, line 14. Numerous modern editions, including Powell, 2006, Caldini Montanari, 2002, and Ferrero, 1950; English translation in Powell, 1990.

In the words of one author, the *Dream of Scipio* is the "sublime conclusion" of Cicero's *De re publica*, where Scipio describes his vision of life after death. Although the complete text of the *De re publica* did not survive to modern times (fragments of the text have been recovered by modern scholars), this section was immensely popular in late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, in large part due to the popular commentary by the early fifth-century writer, Macrobius (see Reynolds, 1983, pp. 131-3, and 231-232). Before the fifteenth century, 190 manuscripts of the *Dream of Scipio* with the Commentary survive, compared with only twenty-six without the Commentary. It was only in the fifteenth century that an independent circulation of the text without the commentary became common (forty fifteenth-century copies are extant with the commentary, as compared with 250 independent copies of the text).

Cicero's shorter ethical and philosophical texts, the three texts included here, *De senectute*, *Paradoxa stoicorum*, and the *Somnium scipionis*, together with *De amicitia* and *De officiis*, not included in this manuscript, but often found together with these texts, were well-established as school texts in the Middle Ages, and became even more important during the Renaissance, when Cicero was avidly studied both for his ideas and as a model of Latin prose. Cicero's exceptional mastery of the Latin language appealed to medieval and Renaissance grammar teachers. Teachers also relied on these works to instruct students in moral philosophy.

Most research on Cicero's manuscript tradition concentrates on the pre-twelfth century copies of his texts. However, there is a growing interest in fifteenth-century manuscripts of Cicero's works for what they can tell us about the use and reception of Cicero, and the use of his works as school texts (see the works on Renaissance education, Gehl, 1993 and Black, 2001).

Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 B.C.) is perhaps the most renowned name in Roman literature. He was a skilled dialectician, rhetorician, and orator, who enjoyed a long career as a politician in the Roman Senate. He practiced law in Rome and studied philosophy in Greece before becoming Consul in 64 B.C. Cicero went into political retirement during the dictatorship of Julius Caesar (c. 48 B.C.). When Caesar was assassinated in 44 B.C., he returned to public life to support the Roman Republic and to oppose the triumvirate of Marcus Anthony, Octavian, and Marcus Lepidus. Cicero died in 43 B.C. Most of our knowledge of Cicero's life comes from his own letters and from Plutarch's *Life of Cicero* composed over a hundred years after his death.

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Biography and introduction to Cicero by The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

<http://www.iep.utm.edu/c/cicero.htm>

Introduction to Stoicism by the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/stoicism/>

Cicero, *De senectute*, The Latin Library:

<http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/senectute.shtml>

English translation of *De senectute*

http://www.4literature.net/Cicero/Cato_or_An_Essay_on_Old_Age/

Latin version of the *Paradoxa stoicorum*

<http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/paradoxa.shtml>

Latin version of *Somnium scipionis*

<http://www.ipa.net/~magreyn/somnium.htm>

The *Dream of Scipio*, in English

http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/cicero_dream_of_scipio_02_trans.htm

Ancient History Sourcebook:

M. Tullius Cicero (105-43 B.C.): from *On the Republic* (*Scipio's Dream*)

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/cicero-republic6.asp>

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